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RTN'S
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1975

WHERE IS RTN'S RAIL TRAVEL YEARBOOK 1975?

A report to the reader:

Our first yearbook has obviously been delayed beyond its originally announced publication date. It will be out very soon. In the meantime, it has been growing in size and features, so you'll be getting more than you thought you would!

Thank you for your advance order! If you haven't ordered yet, and want to be assured of a copy of this very limited edition, send the coupon or a note to us, with remittance of $3.50 per copy (Calif. add tax of 21¢--or 23¢ in BART counties). Thank you!

MESSAGE MEDIA
Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

Send me ____ copy(ies) of RTN's Rail Travel Yearbook 1975 as soon as it's ready.
Amount enclosed: $ _____.

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RAIL TRAVEL NEWS

40¢

VOL.6 NO. 6
SECOND ISSUE OF
MARCH 1976
#128

ON THE COVER

A disappearing sight: the Northeast Corridor conventional train--in this case a northbound morning train on the Penn Central main line at Chickering Tower, south of Back Bay, Boston, seen last September (photo by Fred Matthews). The Corridor is the topic of special coverage this issue, as RTN visits the East Coast as the changeover from Penn Central to ConRail and to Amtrak occurs, and the Washington Metro begins operations.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT TO RTN READERS

AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY to provide direct information to Amtrak on the subject of first class rail passenger service.

Amtrak has informed RTN that its next Board of Directors meeting, on April 28, will take up the question of first class service, and some important decisions will be made. Amtrak can use input from readers now, to help in these decisions which are of interest to many of our readers. However, because of the short time remaining, it is necessary to send us your comments as soon as possible, so we can organize them and pass them on to Amtrak before April 28. We will also publish the results as soon as possible in these pages.

INSTRUCTIONS: Please send your responses on a card or letter SEPARATE FROM ANY OTHER BUSINESS OR EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE. Mail them to: Message Media - RTN, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Please answer as many of the following 10 questions as you can, adding whatever comments you wish. Just write the question number and your answer after it. If you skip a question, list the number and leave a blank space after it. Answer questions with Yes, No, or Maybe, where applicable.

OVERNIGHT - SLEEPING CAR SERVICE

1. Should every room contain its own toilet?
2. Should every room contain its own wash basin?
3. Would smaller rooms than those now standard be acceptable, provided they are well-designed?
4. What other features are <u>essential</u> to sleeping car service?
5. What other <u>optional</u> features might be desirable in new sleeping cars?

DAYTIME - PARLOR CAR SERVICE

6. Should every daytime train offer parlor car service? If no, which trains should be omitted?
7. Would you pay a premium for individual swivel parlor seats (as opposed to Amclub-type, non-swivel seats with single- and double-seating)?
8. Should parlor service be in a completely separate car, or just in a separate section of a car that also carries coach seating?
9. What other features are <u>essential</u> to parlor car service?
10. What other <u>optional</u> features might be desirable in new parlor cars?

Again, please send in your responses as soon as possible so that we may include your views in this survey and get the results back to Amtrak for use at their April 28 Board meeting. We do not plan to publish individual comments by name, but whatever comments you wish to make will prove helpful to Amtrak in making decisions about the future of first class service.

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Published twice monthly by Message Media, P. Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Subscription $9.00 per year; single copy 40¢. STAFF James Russell, Editor; Paul Payton, Editor-at-Large. Regional Correspondents: Pe Putnam Bretz, Malibu; Jack Ferry, Chicago; Kenneth Maylath, Baltimore; Peter Roeh Boston. Mailing date this issue: April 6, 1976.

AMTRAK ACQUIRES THE CORRIDOR; CONRAIL BEGINS OPERATIONS

Amtrak took title to the Boston-Washington Northeast (Colonial) Corridor April 1, over the objections of the Dept. of Transportation. Amtrak's Board of Directors, meeting March 31, voted to buy the Corridor, after ConRail earlier agreed to such a purchase. The price was $87 million, to be paid in 8 installments, the first due Oct 1. In the Congressional appropriation last month for Northeast rail reorganization, the purchase money was specifically omitted, but Congress told Amtrak and ConRail to decide on terms. The installment-plan purchase was the result (see also the article beginning on page 4).

On the same date, the Consolidated Rail Corp. (ConRail) took over operations of 6 bankrupt railroads (the Ann Arbor Railroad originally was to be included among these, but the state of Michigan purchased it. Richard D. Spence, formerly with Southern Pacific, is president of the quasi-governmental railroad organization.

MINNESOTA IS LOSING THE ARROWHEAD

The state of Minnesota, in refusing to pay its portion of operating expenses of Amtrak's Minneapolis-Duluth ARROWHEAD, the train that was inaugurated only last Apr 15 (see RTN, Second Apr issue, 1975), has caused Amtrak to post notices of discontinuance of the run. Altho the train could have been dropped Apr 1, Amtrak decided to run it thru Apr 26 to avoid inconveniencing the public with an abrupt cessation of service. One man, State Senator Arnold, was holding up the state's appropriation on a technicality--an objection to Amtrak's paying the operating railroad incentive bonuses for good on-time performance. A large anti-train Greyhound campaign has appeared in the area served by the train (which Amtrak said has had good ridership), and some observers were investigating whether Arnold had been influenced by the bus interests. Amtrak reluctantly announced that trains 763 and 766 would have their last runs on Apr 25 and 761 would run for the last time Apr 26. The contract between Amtrak and the state expired Mar 31.

USA RAIL PASS EXTENDED THRU SUMMER MONTHS

Amtrak announced Apr 1 that its new USA Rail Pass would continue into the summer, beyond the original May 15 cutoff date. Rates for the heavy summer season will be increased to $250 for 14 days, $325 for 21 days, and $400 for 30 days. During the summer, upgrading to first class status can be done no sooner than 30 minutes before train departure. Amtrak said that lower pass fares for next fall are being considered.

STARTUP OF TWO NEW TRAINS IS ANNOUNCED

The DEL MONTE, called America's oldest name train, discontinued Apr 30, 1971, may be running in 6-12 months. The San Francisco-Monterey, CA run was announced Apr 1 by Santa Clara County Supervisor Dan McCorquodale, altho a lot of red tape must be gotten thru before a startup can occur. The present plan is for two roundtrips per day--a commuter run leaving Monterey at 6am and reaching San Francisco at 9, with a return from S.F. at 5 with 8pm Monterey arrival, and another express roundtrip for tourist travel. The train would carry its traditional parlor car, and fares would be about $8-9 one way. Amtrak and CalTrans are doing a marketing study to determine the amount of subsidy required. The train would be a 403-B operation.

The LAS VEGAS LIMITED, a Los Angeles-Las Vegas, NV weekend fun train, will begin operations May 21, according to a late March announcement. This train is another attempt to tap the Las Vegas market, after the demise of the LAS VEGAS CELEBRITY TRAIN (see RTN, First Oct 1974 issue). The weekends-only train will leave L.A. on Fridays at 1:30pm (train 782), arriving Las Vegas 8:55pm; returning, train 781 will leave Las Vegas Sundays at 2:05pm, reaching L.A. at 7:30pm. Stops are made at Pasadena, Pomona, San Bernardino and Barstow. The train will have a capacity of 360 coach seats, with two lounges. The Nevada-supported 403-B train is currently listed in Amtrak's reservations computer, and reservations can be made in the usual way.

THE MAILING DATE of this issue has been changed to Apr 12. It contains news thru Apr 10.

THE DAY AMTRAK BECAME A RAILROAD

by James Russell

Photos by the author.

Wishing to be in Washington for the historic demise of the bankrupt Northeastern railroads, for the outcome of the battle between Amtrak and DOT for ownership of the Colonial Corridor, and for the startup of operations on the Washington Metro, not to mention seeing the cherry trees in blossom, we talked to Amtrak's friendly public relations department, and became the happy recipients of an Amtrak pass that would permit us not only to accomplish these ends but also to ride a good portion of the Amtrak system and experience operations on some new trains, including Amfleet corridor trains and the LAKE SHORE LIMITED.

The evening of March 30 saw me detraining at Washington Union Station, amid the rubble of the National Visitors Center construction. Amtrak P.R. man Jim Bryant was there to welcome RTN to the Corridor and more or less to take charge of my well-being for nearly the next 48 hours while I absorbed the scene and made notes for this report to RTN readers. Soon we were at dinner, along with Amtrak Board member Ed Ullman--University of Washington professor who had flown out for the monthly Board meeting the following day--, Jim's wife Pat, and Ed's sister. We tried to avoid talking shop in deference to the women, but it was hard, in light of the big day coming up, and the Board meeting at which would be decided whether Amtrak was to own the Corridor or simply to lease it from ConRail, which was taking over the property and operations of the Penn Central and five other railroads--the Lehigh Valley, Central of New Jersey, the Reading, Lehigh and Hudson River, and the Erie Lackawanna--the day after next.

March 31. The clouds of yesterday had turned into a steady rain. The sky was dark and gray. Commuter traffic into Washington was backed up for miles, as the wet pavement slowed drivers. Jim impatiently nudged his German car thru the clog of automobiles and into the parking area under the Amtrak Building in L'Enfant Plaza. Up on the eighth floor, news reports trickled in from around the nation--the latest, an item on the apparent coming demise of the ARROWHEAD: a Minnesota legislator was single-handedly holding out on the state's subsidy of the train because of a technicality--an objection to incentive payments to the railroad for good on-time performance; a Minneapolis civic leader was calling the situation hopeless.

It had been 3½ years since I had visited Amtrak headquarters, and things had expanded considerably. As Jim introduced me around, I began to experience one of the most delightful aspects of this visit--everyone seemed to be familiar with RTN, all seemed most happy to meet the editor, and were most generous with their praise of this publication ("a superb job" was a common phrase).

The Board meeting was beginning as usual at 10am. We walked past the closed doors of the conference room, and I wondered exactly what was being said behind them. There was an air of expectancy at Amtrak, but not as great as one might suppose; everyone seemed too busy to be thinking about the outcome of the meeting.

The day proved to be a long one, but seemed to pass quickly. Jim was called away from the office on another matter, and I took the opportunity, along with Richard L. Day, University of Idaho professor currently doing some marketing research for Amtrak, to ride the new Metro system (see separate article). When more stations are in service, it will be possible to ride the subway from L'Enfant Plaza to Union Station and avoid the rain that we ducked thru today.

Back on the eighth floor, Joe Vranich was showing me the electronic beeper that summons him or any other public relations person who is on duty (a number of them take turns with 24-hour on-call duty) to a telephone for an important off-hour communication. Outside, the JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY cruised by. Time moved slowly now.

Finally, at 6:30pm, the Board meeting adjourned. It had been an exceedingly long meeting.

I don't recall who brought us the word first--it may have been Ed Ullman. But the news was what Amtrak people had been hoping for: Amtrak got the Corridor. The corporation would be allowed to purchase the Boston-Washington line from ConRail, on the installment plan. There was a general feeling of relief. Amtrak would now own the physical plant of the Colonial Corridor, and would operate it on its own, with such operation being phased in within the next six months. It had been a difficult bit of negotiation. There were papers to file before midnight, and the meeting had run until 6:30. The final vote in favor of the arrangement was eleven to one. The one dissenter was Deputy Transportation Secretary John Barnum, who represents the DOT's interests on the Amtrak Board. Barnum had held firm with the Administration's wish that Amtrak not own the Corridor, altho he later acknowledged that the 8-year installment plan purchase was better than outright purchase. Barnum had mounted what was essentially a "filibuster," someone said. The DOT had also opposed Amtrak's taking immediate title to the line, in the event a purchase was approved, until the last of the eight payments was made. As it turned out, Amtrak would be taking title tomorrow, and making payments to ConRail. In turn, ConRail would pay Amtrak for the use of the line for its freight operations. The DOT had reportedly proposed a plan whereby it (the DOT) would take title to the Corridor if Amtrak defaulted on any payment. The DOT was determined that Amtrak should not own its own physical plant--and Amtrak badly wanted the line so it could control its Corridor operations better, could run its own trains and repair its own track more efficiently. And now its wish was fulfilled--Amtrak was at last a railroad, at least here on the East Coast, with its own track and its own stations.

After a late dinner at Jim Bryant's home, we raised our champagne glasses and toasted Amtrak's new Corridor. Then, in a pensive mood, someone said, "There must be a lot of people who aren't celebrating tonight. Think of the people who have worked maybe forty years or more for the same railroad, and now at 12 o'clock the railroad will cease to exist. They'll be working for ConRail instead. It must be a sad occasion when the name they've been associated with all that time just disappears." I thought of a railroad calendar a reader had sent last Christmas, from one of the bankrupts, with a note that it was "The last one." I sincerely hoped that such people would find renewed satisfaction in their work under their new employer, ConRail. We opened the windows to hear the rain, falling harder now. Outdoors the Dogwood was starting to bloom, but we couldn't see it just now. Exhausted, we retired before midnight, and I fell into a deep sleep.

April 1. To my surprise, the sun was beaming brightly, and the sky had cleared. As we drove into Washington, spring was everywhere on the landscape. Cherry blossoms and Daffodils gleamed at the blue sky. The radio was playing an April Fool's joke--a hilariously botched performance of the "Hallelujah Chorus." Traffic moved swiftly and easily today. We hurried into the Amtrak Building. I had an appointment with Dave Watts, Vice President and General Manager of National Operations, and I didn't want to be late.

Today I would be leaving, taking the train to New York. We got word that the threatened transit strike in that city had been tentatively settled. I was relieved, because I would have only 80 minutes to change stations there, and a transit strike might have made it impossible. Shortly, Dave Watts came by Jim Bryant's office and asked to change our appointment time. He was tied up with an unusual and serious problem. It happened that there were about 3 miles of track on the route of the JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY that were supposed to be abandoned under the ConRail takeover. These were Erie Lackawanna tracks on which the Chessie System had trackage rights. The Chessie wouldn't run the RILEY on that segment, and was proposing a time-consuming detour. It looked as if a court battle might ensue. Amtrak was flying an attorney to the scene, and buses were readied at critical points.

Crews were readied who could handle the train on the possible routes it would take. Amtrak could only sit back and wait for the train to approach the section of disputed track.

Meanwhile, I spent about an hour in conversation with Ed Edel, Vice President - Public Relations. Ed was making the point that way too much of Amtrak's energy is spent "fire-fighting" (a favorite Amtrak phrase), combating problems that crop up from outside the corporation--from the bus people, from the administration, from the highway lobby, etc.,--so it leaves little time simply to work on making Amtrak a better railroad. Instead of devoting as much time and energy as possible to service improvements, new marketing approaches, etc., Amtrak has to waste much of its resources in battling its critics. It's hard to know from outside the corporation, Ed said, the day-to-day barriers Amtrak meets. Amtrak wanted to own the Corridor in order to eliminate some of these barriers. Working thru Penn Central, Amtrak had to go thru too many people to make decisions. It would take two months just to make schedule changes. Amtrak would like to start track renovation work tomorrow, but it has to go thru the DOT, which controls its money, so there's another delay. It's no wonder that rail improvements have come so slowly, with so much red tape and so many obstructions.

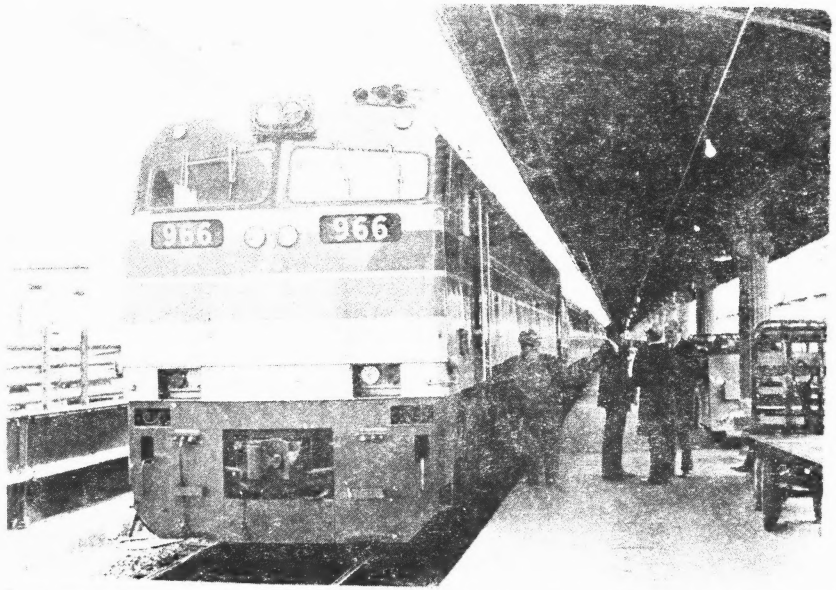
I was flattered that Dave Watts was willing to take nearly an hour of his time on this very busy and difficult day to chat with me. We talked about the RILEY problem, and then got on the subject of Amtrak personnel. Dave said that a main goal is working with Amtrak personnel to inspire them to top-notch performance. "There's a way to motivate and enthuse on-board people that we haven't got our hands on yet," he said. "The real key is how well Amtrak people treat them." Watts was impressed with the personnel at Disney World in Florida. There are 13,000 employees there, who go thru a "Walt Disney University" for their training, and their standards are high. Watts is personally going to investigate their program to see if there are any aspects of it that can be adopted by Amtrak.

It was getting late, and I had to rush off to catch the 1:05pm train, the SENATOR, to New York. This would be my first opportunity to ride an Amfleet train, and my first ride on Amtrak-owned tracks. Jim Bryant offered to drive me to Union Station, since it was getting late, and we said quick goodbyes and rushed off. On the way out, Jim learned that Paul Reistrup was also taking off on the SENATOR. It looked like a great stroke of luck; there would be a rare opportunity to chat with the President of Amtrak.

We hurried into Union Station, Jim brushing station personnel aside with his official identification card. We walked out onto the platform and immediately spotted Mr. Reistrup, along with Ed Ullman, looking over the new GE engine on our train. We had met only briefly a year ago, and Jim introduced us again. "I want to tell you something," Reistrup said immediately, as if he couldn't contain himself. "Today it's ours. We own the Corridor." He must have known I knew it already, but he must have felt compelled to say it anyway. "Where are you going today?" asked Jim. "The President of the railroad ought to look over the property on the first day of ownership," replied Reistrup.

We looked over the engine some more, and Reistrup talked with the ConRail conductor who would be aboard. It was engine 966, a GE E-60 electric. We learned that two other such engines had been bad-ordered, and the third one proved the charm. We boarded the train at the first coach and walked back to the Amclub car at the rear--car 20124--of the 6-car train. Coach passengers were boarding already. Walking ahead of me, Reistrup stopped and lifted a suitcase to the luggage rack for a middle-aged woman. I wondered if she would ever know that it was the President of the railroad who had done the porter duties for her.

The Amclub car had the rear section devoted to first class seating, the front part filled with coach seats, and a snack bar in the center. A curtain divided the first class area from the snack section. The car interior was very attractive, in shades



THE 1:05 DEPARTURE from Washington on April 1--the Amfleet SENATOR waits for loading while President Reistrup and Board Member Ullman chat with the ConRail conductor.

of brown and sand, with red plush seats. A single row of seats ran along the left side, with a double row opposite them. The two restrooms were at the far end of the car, past the coach section. Amtrak plans to phase in the first class service, and as patronage increases, to devote the entire car to the luxury seating. I decided that one should not approach these cars expecting the conventional parlor car. This car is in the European style, Reistrup told me. As we got underway, precisely at 1:05, he asked the car attendant about the nature of complaints he receives. The answer was that the three most common complaints are about the 2-and-1 seating, the lack of a restroom in the first class area, and the fact that the restrooms are "co-educational." It seemed to me that Amtrak could quite easily devote one of the two restrooms to men, one to women, rather than having two co-ed facilities.

Reistrup and Ullman sat in adjacent double seats, and I took a single seat across the aisle. Ullman was going only to Baltimore, just to try out the new cars, and I stayed out of their conversation until that point, busying myself with my notes and with a lunch of hamburger (95¢) and yogurt (65¢). The small first-class menu, dated March 1976, was similar to other such Corridor menus that have been around a long time. The "Amclub Lunch and Dinner" section listed three selections: (1) Roast veal with mushroom sauce, zucchini-green beans and tomatoes, noodles with cheese ($4.75); (2) Breast of Cornish hen, Cordon Bleu, wild rice combination, peas and carrots, at $3.95; (3) Salisbury steak, barbecue sauce, cut green beans, ranch style potatoes, at $2.95. Each of these meals came with tomato juice, Mexican cole slaw, bran muffins and butter, Karat cream cake, and coffee, tea or milk. There were four sandwich choices, and a number of miscellaneous snacks and beverages. Ed Ullman ordered the Cornish hen, only to learn that breast of chicken had been substituted, which he agreed to try instead. He told Reistrup that he always tries everything he can on the menu when he travels around the country. Reistrup said that he prefers to order only his regular favorites. He was having a hamburger too.

At Baltimore, which we reached at 1:49, Ullman prepared to detrain, and Reistrup told me he was "going to get on the motor." He would ride in the engine cab from here to Philadelphia. As Ullman stood outside on the platform, he half in jest produced a napkin and cleaned the outside of my window.

Shortly, we moved out again along the line. The Amfleet cars rode very well. Jim Bryant had urged me to try the ride over the trucks, and I did, finding it scarcely different from mid-car. One feature of this train I found really appealing was the conductor's announcement made three minutes before each stop, and once again just as we approached a station. The ConRail conductor on this train had an excellent delivery. "Ladies and gentlemen, we are now arriving Baltimore" he would say. He reminded passengers to check the luggage racks for belongings, and told them that they could get off from either end of the car. He concluded with "Thank you for riding Amtrak's Amfleet, and have yourself a nice afternoon." The train, incidentally, was quite full. The three of us were the only Amclub patrons on at Washington, but the car began to fill further up the line. Amclub reservations are not made by seat; only a space reservation is made, and you can select your own seat. The attendant asks each rider his preference for smoking or non-smoking section. He assigns part of the Amclub area to each variety of passenger.

We reached Philadelphia at 3:19--4 minutes behind schedule, due to slow orders. Here, in the Bicentennial City, a bit of history was being made today; this is the headquarters of ConRail, as it was of the Penn Central. Reistrup climbed out of the engine and returned to our Amclub car. He motioned me to the seat beside him (seat 37, Reistrup in seat 38), and talked about the safety features of the GE loco. The engineer looks as if he has the twitches, he said. He has to keep touching some metal part of the cab at least every 20 seconds, or a dead-man control will automatically apply the brakes. There were several other intricate systems that I didn't quite understand.

To my astonishment, Reistrup suddenly pulled a small blue card from his pocket. "I'm converting to your rating system," he said, and I saw that printed on the card in reduced type were the rating summaries from RTN's last reader train rating survey (see RTN, First Jan. issue). He pointed out a few anomalies in the results. How come Auto-Train gets a higher rating for track and roadbed than our Florida trains, he asked; they run on the same track. He suggested that a "halo effect" was operating; when people rate a train generally higher, they tend to inflate their ratings of all its features.

We rode along for an hour and 40 minutes to New York, the President of the railroad out inspecting his new track on the first day, and I incredibly with his undivided attention all that time. Probably in no other way than by this fortuitous occurrence could I have gotten the ear of the Amtrak leader for such a long period of time. He talked about Amtrak's new railroad property. We got some more GG-1's today, he said, and a hundred clocker cars disappeared. Amtrak also got at least one work train, and some wrecking equipment, plus yard switchers. He said that May 1 is the target date for Amtrak's hiring of the track workers. They want to start track renovation as soon as possible--they don't want to miss the summer work season. Of course this timing is also dependant upon DOT's release of money for the job, so these important jobs are still not entirely within Amtrak's control. The second step will be the takeover of dispatchers and tower crews. Amtrak wants to take over the operations from ConRail as quickly as possible, but in any case within six months. Until then, Amtrak pays ConRail to run its trains, as it did Penn Central just yesterday. Without controlling your own operations, Reistrup told me, it's not like running a railroad; you're trying to run a railroad on the tracks of someone else who doesn't want you there.

Reistrup repeated an expression of the sentiments I heard earlier from Ed Edel: Amtrak feels like a walnut in a vise. On the one side is Congress telling you to expand, and on the other is the DOT telling you to contract. You're caught between the two conflicting forces.

Reistrup talked a little about recent Congressional hearings on Amtrak's funding. He said they felt that Senator Eagleton's hearings had gone well. He had been required to justify capital expenditures: if Amtrak was a failure, would the U.S. be stuck with the new passenger cars? No problem, answered Reistrup; passenger cars

THE FIRST DAY: Amtrak President Paul Reistrup surveys his "new" railroad on April 1 from the vantage point of Amclub car 20124.

are easy to dispose of in today's world. What about the stations? He didn't have such an easy answer to that question. "He was philosophizing," Reistrup explained. Congress really didn't expect Amtrak to be a failure. But still, there is a great deal of uncertainty with the next fiscal year's budget. Suddenly, Reistrup asked me, rather rhetorically, "What will happen if we lose some of our routes?" I was not prepared to try to answer that question, but I found myself saying quickly, "It doesn't really matter in the long run. What is more important is that the system will eventually expand."

At this point, Reistrup brought up the subject of first class service. It will be the topic of the next Board meeting, on April 28. Reistrup said he feels that first class service should be offered on all daytime trains. He would propose this to the Board later this month. He suggested that RTN could help in this decision by doing a reader survey on this topic (see page 2). On the subject of Amtrak's Board, he said he's never seen a smoother-functioning Board in any corporation. It's made up of very different people--a housewife, a college professor, railroad men, etc., but they work together very nicely.

I had earlier noticed a sound that I thought was the brakes in our car. It was fairly loud, and resembled the sound of a diesel horn. I thought I heard it again, and called Reistrup's attention to it. It was fairly faint this time. "I think you're hearing the horn of the engine," he said. Pretty soon I heard a louder sound. This wasn't the horn, and it seemed to be coming from our car. This time Reistrup agreed it was probably the disc brakes, and he jotted "funny brake noise" in his notebook, to remind himself to check it out. There are certain conditions under which the engineer of this type of engine applies the brakes while the throttle is still open. I asked if this wouldn't lead to increased brake wear, and Reistrup agreed it would. Perhaps this braking action was the source of the noise we heard. These engines, by the way, have an automatic accelerating feature. "He just puts the throttle in the eighth notch, and it accelerates smoothly by itself," Reistrup explained.

"Our current problems," Reistrup went on, "in order of importance, are temperature control, the reservations system, and people attitudes." I suggested that personnel attitudes may be the most difficult of all to change, since there is no guarantee that money alone can solve them. I thought back to Dave Watts's comment about how can Amtrak motivate people to perform at their best. Reistrup said that Amtrak people in middle levels of management are being sent to Southern Railway's management school, with the courses being given in various locations around the country. One person was being sent to British Transport college for three months this summer.

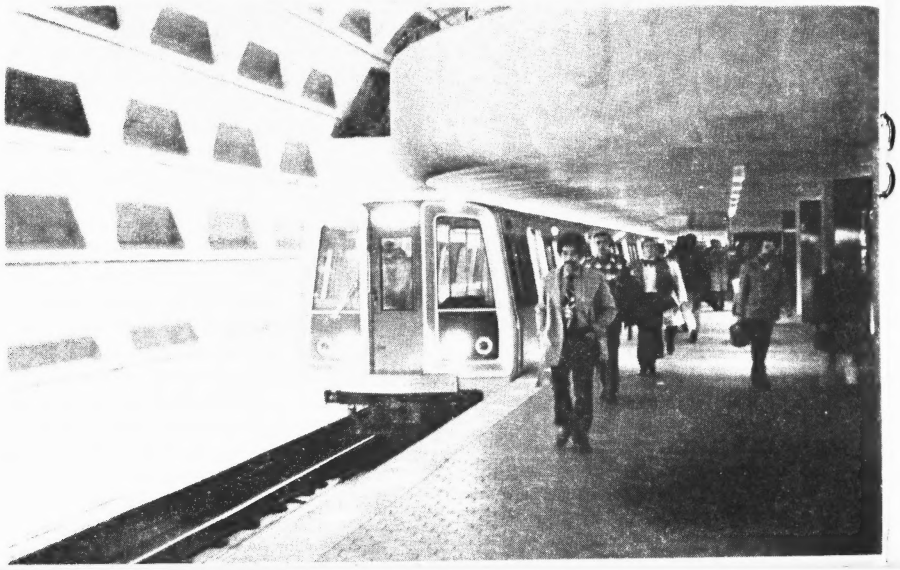
In the past, it was often hard for Amtrak to recruit good people, since the corporation had scarcely any fringe benefits for employees before Reistrup stepped in. Since taking over, Reistrup has initiated a retirement program and liberalized vacation time to match other corporations, and is working on a disability insurance program. It seemed incredible to me that such things had been non-existent all that time. Many good railroad people wouldn't join Amtrak before, since they didn't want to lose their benefits.

We reached Newark only one minute late, and I prepared to detrain at New York, coming up in 15 minutes. As we pulled into New York's Penn Station, we saw the Turbo-Train a couple of tracks over, waiting for a later northbound departure. "It made it!" joked Reistrup. I expressed dismay that I may never get to ride it again before it's gone--likely to be sold to Canada. There were metal bars over the forward dome windows. Jim Bryant had told me that a man was killed in that dome location recently when a 14-year-old boy dropped some large object on the windshield from an overpass.

Our train halted, the conductor on the P.A. wished us a nice afternoon, and after thanking Mr. Reistrup, I hopped off the Amclub car, to travel to Grand Central Terminal to catch the LAKE SHORE LIMITED. Reistrup would go on to New Haven, and presumably return to Washington. But the rest of his trip would be spent up among the coach passengers, checking out operations there, looking into every possible aspect of the running of his "new" railroad.

Urban - Suburban Transit

WASHINGTON'S METRO OPENS



(Lower left photo: the Farragut North station on Mar 31. Above: other end of the line--the Rhode Island Avenue station on the same rainy day. Photos by Message Media.)

In 1909 the Washington Post proposed a subway for the nation's capital. Better late than never, on Mar 29 the first leg of the new Metro system in Washington opened to paying customers, after a preceding Saturday of free rides during which four times the expected 10,000 first-time passengers appeared.

On the third day of revenue operations, your editor was on the scene, riding the 4.6-mile route between Rhode Island Avenue and Farragut North at the start of evening rush hour. Automatic fare equipment is not yet installed, so an attendant waits at an entrance point with a fare box before him into which is deposited 55¢ (during rush hours) or 40¢ (at other times), one flat fare for any amount of riding. Later on, sliding fares will be in effect.

The line, only a small portion of the final 100-mile system, runs from the elevated Rhode Island Ave. station north of downtown Washington, parallels Chessie System tracks to the Union Station stop, the beginning of a subway section that runs on the Farragut North, with stops at Judiciary Square and Metro Center. For such a short line, it was certainly seeing a heavy patronage the first week.

A comparison with BART is immediately invited, for the Rohr-built equipment certainly resembles the Bay Area machines in many aspects. Cars have the familiar BART sounds, tho loud rumbling in subways was heard from station platforms. Car interiors are much like BART cars, with solid plastic seat cushions to discourage vandalism, and a few more upright bars for standees to cling to. About 40 cars are now considered ready for service.

To eyes familiar with BART, the system map seems to show a better plan, hitting more places that people need to go to (once it is complete). Early next year the next section, including service to National Airport, is expected to open. The entire system will cost $4.5 billion when completed, unless inflation intervenes further. But Washington will have a system to be proud of, and at last is joining the other great cities of the world--Paris, London, New York, Berkeley--that boast of fine subway systems. Station design, incidentally, is similar around the system, being a natural concrete grid pattern, as seen in the photo.

(Report by James Russell, with assistance of Ken Maylath.)

THE CONTROVERSIAL PEOPLE-MOVER will get a new lease on life, as UMTA said this month it wants to finance downtown projects in three cities, paying 80% of the cost, each system running about $20 million total. UMTA thinks the "personal rapid transit" systems are better than subways. Los Angeles, Atlanta, Miami, Denver, and Honolulu have already expressed interest in them, and cities have until June 30 to submit formal proposals for funding.

A SURPRISE MOVE by San Diego county supervisors Apr 7 resulted in a veto of a proposed L.A.-San Diego commuter train. A second such train has been stalled for 6 months by a refusal by Santa Fe to operate the train on its tracks. Two refurbished cars for the trains arrived in L.A. late in March, deadheaded in on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED, and five other cars are to arrive soon.

THE SAN FRANCISCO Municipal Railway was idled by a strike of city craft workers that began Apr 1. Shortly after, taxi drivers joined the strike, leaving the city with only BART and a private jitney service for public transportation.

TRANSIT BRIEFS: Pittsburgh is proposing a Supertrolley system in lieu of the rejected Skybus plan, on a 22.3 mile system costing $531 million... A New York City transit strike was averted at the last minute on Apr 1 by a wage settlement which could add about $40 million to the Transit Authority's labor costs... The ICC has okayed a 37% ICG fare increase in the Chicago area... Two Philadelphia streetcars collided underground Apr 5, injuring 27 passengers, in morning rush hour... A panel of New Yorkers last month judged New York's subway system the best in the world, in terms of numbers of people served... Starting this month, New York's MTA is extending its off-peak reduced fare program till year-end, on the LIRR and the Harlem, Hudwon and New Haven commuter lines... Rumors are that Boeing-Vertol will default on its contract to build articulated streetcars for Boston and San Francisco...

Rail Canada

THE FUTURE OF transcontinental passenger service will be decided by the outcome of public hearings to be held as follows: Ottawa, Apr 6 (4 days); Toronto, Apr 12 (Ont. Supreme Court Bldg); Sudbury, Apr 20 (19 Lisgar St. S.); Montreal, Apr 27 (1080 Beaver Hall Hill); Winnipeg, May 3 (Man. Legislative Bldg); Regina, May 10 (1867 Hamilton St.); Saskatoon, May 17 (City Hall Council Chamber); Edmonton, May 31 (Law Courts Bldg); Calgary, Jun 7 (1301 16th Ave); Vancouver, Jun 14 (1075 W. Georgia St); Ottawa, Jun 28, summary of arguments. If you can't attend these, send written briefs to: Secretary, Railway Transport Committee, 275 Slater St., Ottawa, Ontario. A summary of findings will be published after the hearings. Shortly after, a Preferred Plan will be drawn up, to be subject to public comments, and followed by a Final Plan. Regional services will be discussed in separate regional hearings.

A BROKEN RAIL derailed the eastbound SUPER CONTINENTAL at 3:02am Mar 23, 3½ miles east of Sioux Lookout, Ont. Ten cars derailed but remained upright and there were no injuries. Only the last car, a sleeper used as a crew car, remained on the tracks.

CANADIAN NATIONAL OFFICIALS are indicating that only one SUPER CONTINENTAL section will operate this summer, instead of the usual two trains.

CP RAIL BEGAN month-long tests of the LRC train on the Montreal-Quebec City route, and in mid-March announced that the train had set a Canadian speed record of 129mph. The previous record was 112 set in 1936 by a CP steam locomotive.

CN'S SUPER CONTINENTAL westbound from Edmonton Mar 17 was turned back after an emergency brake application near Spruce Grove, 10 miles west. Wheels were flattened on several cars, and officials declared that continued operation was unsafe. Passengers were flown or bused on from Edmonton.

CP RAIL SUSPENDED passenger service on its Esquimalt & Nanaimo subsidiary on Vancouver Island effective Apr 2. The lone RDC was sent to the mainland Apr 3 aboard the "Carrier Princess." The car derailed in the Victoria suburb of Langford Apr 1 at a switch thought vandalized by pranksters, and suffered damage to its undercarriage. No replacement bus service was initiated.

FROM SEA TO SEA AND BACK ON AMTRAK

by James Russell

On preceding pages were related my experiences at Amtrak headquarters when the Colonial Corridor changed hands. Now let me tell about the 7000-mile Amtrip that took me there and back.

The long trip began on a small train--the SAN JOAQUIN, train 710, on March 27 at Oakland, Calif. This is a very nice train indeed; it has some improved equipment on it now, and could use more patrons. Consist this day was F units 112 & 118; baggage-coach combo 1602 (formerly a baggage-lounge named "Silver Salon", fitted with 36 wine and blue airline-style seats, unusual rounded interior design), lunch counter car 8117, and coach 6800 (former cafe-observation built for the Great Northern, in splendid unrefurbished condition). The train had a fine crew, and the only misadventure of the run was the fact that President Ford was to arrive at Fresno about the same time as we, so the FBI ordered all trains halted there so crossing gates would not slow Ford's motorcade from the airport. We sat at Fresno 45 minutes, but never saw a motorcade. A couple of middle-aged women on the train made it clear they resented this delay, and would under no conditions vote for Mr. Ford. We gained some time, arriving Bakersfield 30mins late. We learned that Santa Fe will build a new Bakersfield station, agreeing that they erred in tearing down the old one (station is now in a trailer).

Two people took the Greyhound connection to L.A. Union Station. The bus left 30 mins late, thanks mostly to Santa Fe freights blocking the road, and the driver hurried us like mad over the Tehachapis. At one point he stopped to move a family with a screaming baby boy to the rear of the bus--couldn't take it any longer. He really worked hard to get us to our station at 7:42, before the 8pm SOUTHWEST LIMITED departure. Train 4 was a real treat, as ever. We occupied the New York thru car on the end (car 2621 "Pacific Northwest"). Consist was: engines 508, 518, 617; cars 1030, 9990, 9909,9985, 9916, 2214, 9351, 8072, 2759, 2367, 2621. Best feature of this train was the superb dining car crew under Mr. B. Jones, who is an extraordinarily talented steward. The dome on this train is probably my favorite type of car now running; but there was no music in it (there was a year ago), and several windows were cracked and steamed. It showed a general air of neglect. At 8pm the second night we stopped to look for a suspected hotbox under car 2367. Bedroom B was getting a burning odor, but it was apparently only an aisle ceiling heater going bad.

We reached Kansas City on time, early in the morning, and our car was set out and placed in the consist of the NATIONAL LIMITED, train 30, due to depart at 11am. The porter pointed out a good place for breakfast (the train serves no food until departure)--the Crown Center Hotel complex across the street. There is easy access to the station tracks from an adjoining parking lot, so it's no problem leaving the train and returning, taking pictures from an overhead roadway, etc.

I was quite pleased with the NATIONAL LIMITED. It's said that the train has been improved recently, and it rose in our last rating survey. At no point did I experience discomfort from bad track. Poor sections are taken slowly, and there are a number of excellent, repaired sections. The dining car crew was excellent. The porter was anxious to please, but seemed poorly trained. Once he washed my window, at my request. Consist of #30 was: engines 593, 472 (ex-Milw "B" unit); cars 1191, 2621, 2796, 8324, 5646, 5670, 5431, 5275. At St. Louis were added to the rear two deadheading cars--a coach and dome lounge 9371. Having the dome on the train was a novelty, and I photographed it as we moved over the bridge across the Mississippi. The deadheads went to Indianapolis, to Beech Grove Shops. Beyond St. Louis we moved into a Midwestern storm, and we headed toward a big double rainbow for a half hour (without ever reaching it!). In the dark, across Illinois and Indiana, we encountered an electric storm which filled the sky with sheet lightning. I slept poorly,

not because of bad track, but because engine noises from the old Milwaukee Road engine kept waking me.

At Harrisburg, I was to take the tri-weekly connection, train 430, to Washington. No crew members bothered to keep track of where people in the thru sleeper were headed, and I had to get to the right place thru my own efforts. The arrangement is that you move to the last car (a coach--car 5275) at Harrisburg, and do it quickly, because the car is taken off the train there. Train 430 consisted of this coach and a GG-1 for power (usually it's a diesel). I was completely unprepared for this train. We were quickly out in the wilds, and moving slowly along the Susquehanna River. It reminded me of the former Northwestern Pacific Budd car on the Eel River. I enjoyed the slow ride and the sightseeing immensely. And then when we reached the main Penn Central line, we suddenly accelerated up to Metroliner speed, and we were a quite different kind of train! Rocks flew at us, and I was glad for the lexan. The coach, a former Rio Grande car, rode very well under all these diverse conditions.

We reached Washington 20mins late, and our good-sized crowd detrained (patronage was good all along my route, incidentally, and I found a goodly number of first-time train riders, undoubtedly a lot of them riding on the USA Rail Pass).

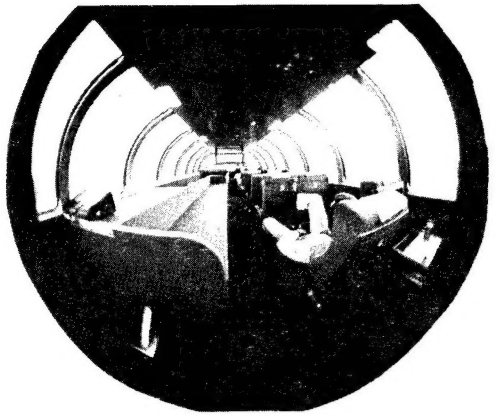
On the return trip I boarded the LAKE SHORE LIMITED, train 49, at New York April 1. Consist (after the Boston section was added) was: engine 588; cars 1513, 2028 "Loch Tarbet", 2815 "Otter River" (my car), 2233 "Sebring" (overheating), 5644, 8330, 3644 "Nathan Hale", and 2 or 3 coaches. I found this a very fine train, with skillful crews. Two points stand out: the 24-seat diner section was woefully inadequate to handle the patrons of this train, and something should be done pronto before the train loses its patronage. I had a 2½-hour wait for dinner, and after an hour waiting for breakfast, I decided to buy sandwiches for lunch in the lounge--much faster, tho poorer quality. The lounge was parlor car "Nathan Hale"--a car which was a big hit with the passengers, many of whom hadn't seen big, swivel parlor seats before. The train was carrying a slumbercoach load of military recruits this night.

I slept like a log on this train, and would recommend it to prospective riders. The timekeeping was a bit of a problem. We lost time progressively out of New York, until we were 1 hour, 8mins down at Toledo. Slow orders for track work seemed to be responsible. Expecting to connect with train 5 in Chicago, I would have only 1 hour, 20mins between trains. Would we lose more time and miss the connection? The conductor assured us that we would make it, so I relaxed. Sure enough, we gained some time, and had 40mins between trains, adequate to walk out into Chicago Union Station and buy some magazines and look around before boarding No. 5.

Ridership had been heavy on the LAKE SHORE, and quite a few people were connecting to the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR. Our train left Chicago on time, with the following consist: 2 SDP40F's, cars 2653 (deadhead), 1053, 1573, 4805, 4812 (unrefurbished), 4552, 9461 (dome coach with wall murals intact), 9382 (ex-Milwaukee Road Great Dome), 8065, 2617 "Pacific Island" (my car), 2663 "Silver Slope", and BN business car "Clark Fork River."

I am beginning to realize that the SFZ is my favorite train. Certainly it offers unsurpassed scenery on its route thru the Sierra. The first hour out of Chicago is great fun, as you zoom along at about 90mph with cars on the adjacent highway seeming to travel backwards. This was really a fun train, with the domes especially popular. The crew on this run was very professional. There have been many stories in the past about crew problems and malfunctioning diners, so let us hope that all runs of this train continue to be as good as this one. There was, however, one major problem--the only such problem encountered in my 7000 miles: there was an engine failure the first night, and 3 hours were lost while a pair of BN freight engines were attached to the head of the train. I didn't experience that expected first-night-out rough track on the BN, but now I don't know if it was slow running and a long stop that let me sleep well, or whether the track has been improved.

A lot of people were heading for Denver for skiing, and they were greatly inconvenienced by our lateness (Paul Reistrup told me earlier that Chicago-Denver is no



Fish-eye lens view of Great Dome car 9382 on the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR April 2. Photo by Message Media.

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On the topic of food, I would like to recommend that Amtrak improve its vegetables and potato accompaniments to its meals. The meat selections with the dinners and lunches are fine, but the potatoes are invariably mashed, and tasting like instant potatoes. Why not serve rice or pasta as an alternate? The vegetables always are overcooked and taste canned. The first night out on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED, the vegetable of the day was poor-quality peas. The second night out the vegetable was poor-quality peas. Really! Is this necessary on a luxury train? Canned beans are the other most frequent vegetable found, always limp and overcooked.

After this monotony, I was happy to find that on the SFZ we had Mexi-corn the first night, and carrots the second. And to my delight, there was a Western Region luncheon special on the weekend: a delicious turkey, bacon and tomato club sandwich.

At Denver, the two domes were removed, plus one sleeper, and ex-SP dome lounge 9373 was added. People commented that they preferred the 9373 to the Great Dome, which had airline-type coach seating, with seats too low for the windows, refurbished in a handsome dark blue. It was a spectacular car, but the 9373 seemed more homey. The lounge attendant played some good jazz as we rolled across the wilds of Wyoming, under a starry sky. Music is one of the most difficult commodities to obtain when you are traveling, and I always appreciate efforts to provide it.

The second night the horns on our fresh Amtrak units (put on at Denver) malfunctioned, and we were delayed a half hour at Sparks, Nevada while they were worked on. At Sparks, two coaches and private observation "La Condesa" were added to the train. Nearing Sacramento, the horns were still bad, and we stopped for 10 minutes at Roseville while an SP engine was added to the front to provide a horn.

The crossing of the Sierra was spectacular, and dome patrons were really taking in the scenery. On March 23 there had been a freight derailment here that knocked out part of a snowshed and caused the train to be re-routed over Western Pacific. Everyone in the dome stood to look down at the remains of two freight cars as we moved past the scene. Open boxes of Westinghouse fluorescent lamps were protruding from one smashed boxcar.

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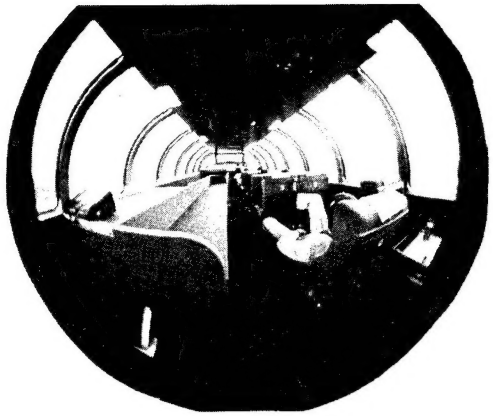

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After being nearly 4 hours late in Iowa, we gained time on our padded schedule and reached Oakland only 1¼ hours late. As we passed near Richmond, a kid heaved a hunk of concrete at the dome and broke one of the big curved side windows, without injuring anyone. It had been an exciting trip, as it usually is on the rails, and a great way to see America. As one first-time rider remarked in the diner of the SFZ: "I can see why people take the train. It's a nice break!"

Mixed Train of Thoughts

THE ENEMIES OF passenger trains have been hard at it during this critical period of Congressional debate over Amtrak funding. The extremely negative article by Donald I. Rogers mentioned here last issue apparently was printed in every Hearst newspaper in the country (Rogers is on the Hearst payroll). Not only that, but it was followed up by an editorial in every Hearst paper calling attention to the article and reiterating its claim that Amtrak "has used more energy per passenger mile, polluted the environment more per passenger mile and cost more to operate per passenger mile than any other existing form of transportation." Then scandal columnist Jack Anderson's cronies got into Amtrak and went thru their records. They didn't come up with anything new, but tried to make a story about small amounts spent for entertainment, etc. These Johnny-come-latelys fussed about Paul Reistrup's $85,000 salary. They probably weren't around during the long, hard campaign to get Congress to increase Amtrak's President's salary to that amount so the corporation could get a decent man as its leader. Amtrak called their work a "nit-picking hatchet job." A spokesman said the kids that plowed thru Amtrak expense accounts "certainly did not conduct themselves in a professional manner" altho Amtrak cooperated fully. (Incidentally, readers in our area never got the full Jack Anderson story; the San Francisco Chronicle, which clips off articles with a meat cleaver, left out the positive remarks at the end, printing the negative comments at the beginning of the column).....

* * *

AND THEN THE Wall Street Journal, in its series predicting the state of the world in the year 2000, dismissed Amtrak in three sentences (Apr 1), merely picking up a comment of a DOT spokesman that "It's only a matter of time before Congress and the public realize the folly of pumping billions of tax dollars into a system that serves no great public purpose...". The Journal admitted that its last future-predicting attempt, 10 years ago, was way off the beam, and the present one is likely to be also. (Maybe the Wall Street Journal won't be around in 2000)..... MOBIL OIL CORPORATION doesn't like trains either. In its latest of a series of "educational" columns on energy ("Observations," Mar 28) it resorts to a cartoon of two silly-looking legislators looking at a broken-down, Rube Goldbergish steam engine, with the comment: "What a great design, Senator. Let's try it on the oil companies"..... ALL THE TIME that the oil moguls and the highway lobby are fighting good public transportation, the nation is slipping back into its old ways of over-dependence on the auto. Auto sales rose 50% in March (compared with March 1975) and the DOT had to report (Mar 24) that "The nation's traffic fatalities rose more than 4% in February over the level of February 1975, abruptly ending a downward trend that covered the last six months"....

* * *

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION decided late in March to ask Congress to subsidize small airlines that serve small towns, all the while that it is fighting adequate rail passenger subsidies. And buses get some very direct subsidies too, in addition to the under-the-counter ones: starting last Nov 19, Michigan-subsidized express bus round trips began Saginaw-Flint-Lansing-Chicago, operated by Indian Trails, paralleling the BLUE WATER LIMITED. Michigan also subsidizes, as of Feb 1, the following Greyhound runs: Muskegon-Chicago; Lansing-Detroit; Sault Ste. Marie-Calumet; St. Ignace-Duluth ..... AMTRAK DEDICATED ITS Nashville station on Apr 6. It spent $140,000 to redo the old station..... THE FIRST F40 to haul a revenue train ran from New Haven to Boston on train 176, the SENATOR, on Apr 7. The new 4-axle GM locomotive, a smaller version of the SDP40F, will also be used on Western corridor runs that will carry new Amfleet equipment. (Chicago-St. Louis, incidentally, will also get Amfleet cars).... CANADIAN NATIONAL OFFICIALS were to meet with Amtrak's Paul Reistrup and other Amtrak people early this month for a briefing on how the corporation operates, so they'd know what to expect if a Canadian "Cantrak" should be formed..... SUNSET COAST LINE is the name given the proposed 232-mile Los Angeles County commuter railroad now under discussion. Financing of the line will be assisted by two sales-tax increase measures placed on the June 8 ballot in Southern California..... JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY came to a halt on Apr 1 when the train reached a 2.9-mile section of track that was to be abandoned under ConRail (see also article starting on p. 4). Passengers were bused from Peru, IN to Chicago while Amtrak tried to resolve the conflict over the Chessie System's refusal to operate on the track it had been jointly using along with PC.....

* * *

A CRACKED WHEEL caused the Auto-Train derailment on Mar 7 (see last issue), according to the RF&P Railroad, but Auto-Train was awaiting the National Transportation Safety Board's findings before accepting this explanation..... SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR ran over and severed a 345,000 volt Nebraska Public Power District transmission line between Hastings and Lincoln which was knocked down by a severe wind and blizzard hitting south-central Nebraska on Mar 30. During this storm the train was reportedly held several hours at one station rather than proceed in the blizzard..... A SAN DIEGAN train struck an armored car on Mar 29, doing slight damage..... FULL BAGGAGE SERVICE was restored to the SAN JOAQUIN in late March..... FEDERAL DISTRICT COURT in Indianapolis ruled in late March that PC must repair the bad track in that area--360 miles of it--, affirming arbitration panel decisions made earlier in Washington.....

* * *

THE KEYSTONE TRAIN has been purchased by SEMTA, reports Michigan ARP, at a price of $10,000 per car. The 8-car train will be refurbished for the Pontiac-Detroit commuter service..... PORTLAND-SEATTLE TRAINS have seen a big jump in ridership, reports Amtrak's Western office. A special 21-day excursion fare the a general business upturn have combined to create standing-room-only loads on two recent weekends. Amtrak said more cars would be added for the Easter holiday period..... NEW EXCURSION FARES have been set for four trains--the SF ZEPHYR, PANAMA LIMITED, SUNSET LIMITED, and BLACK HAWK--, Amtrak announced Apr 5. Thirty-day round trip coach excursion fares, as of May 1, will apply to these route segments: Truckee-Reno-Sparks and the following cities: S.F., Oakland, Sacramento, Ogden, Denver; Memphis-New Orleans; New Orleans-El Paso; and Chicago-Dubuque..... THE NORTHEAST CORRIDOR will be operated by Amtrak as essentially a separate railroad from the rest of the system, with Charles E. Bertrand, head of the corridor's operations, working out of Philadelphia. Amtrak said late in March that he will be assisted by these key people: Robert A. Herman, Richard E. Pinkham, James E. Frick, Spencer H. Heltzinger, Edward C. Lawson, Donald D. Muir, and J. Stewart Warden..... AMTRAK'S BOARD APPROVED on Mar 31 the construction of the new Cleveland Lakefront station, adjacent to the existing temporary structure. But Cleveland rail supporters are still pressing for the use of Union Terminal there..... AN AMTRAK SONG has been composed by ticket agent Don Ohman at Pasco, WA. Called "American Tracks, Amtrak," it has been recorded on a 45rpm record and can be bought from the composer for $1.50 (address 2413 W. 7th St., Kennewick, WA 99336)..... STARTING APRIL FIRST, Amtrak began offering a 25% discount off-peak excursion fare on the NY-Buffalo line..... AMTRAK'S PAUL REISTRUP rode 31,611 Amtrak rail miles during his first year as President, plus 3613 miles in Canada and Europe. He made a total of 95 rail trips within the U.S., and he writes a "de-briefing" on each trip..... THE MISSISSIPPI QUEEN, new river steamboat, will have its maiden voyage July 27 (not May 11 as planned earlier), running from Cincinnati to New Orleans and return..... OUR NEXT ISSUE should not be missed: look for a special feature on new Amtrak equipment plans.....

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"It is my contention that no matter what dire situation the train is in, if the crew is good the passengers will still come away with good feelings toward Amtrak. They are the most important part of a train and Amtrak should concentrate on training them on how to act with passengers."--Peter Fahrenwald in The Fast Mail, April.

CARS & CONSISTS

*MERCHANTS LIMITED train 178 at New York Mar. 27: engine 969 (GE electric); cars 21050, 21044, 21010 (Amcoaches), 20010 (Amcafe), 20201 (snack bar coach with tables in one half section; crew said it was first revenue run for this type of car); deadheading Amcoaches 21124, 21122.

*CHAMPION train 86 at Florence, SC Mar 17: engines 642, 612; cars 1163, 1402, 2032 "Loch Rannoch", 4419, 4424, 5464, 4441, 4430, 4590, 4411, 3333, 8022, 8014 (diner/lounge), 3220 "Hollywood Beach", 2766 "Savannah", 2232 "Ocala", SCL bus. car 310.

*Amtrak lounge 9352, a Pleasure Dome car, has been rebuilt almost completely at the Topeka shops after being severely damaged in the wreck at Melvern, KS in July, 1974, and is again running on the SOUTHWEST LIMITED (was in the consist leaving Chicago Mar 19). Reported in better condition now than before the wreck.

*Long Island Rail Road train 16 (Montauk Passenger) Mar 26: engines 251, 219; cars 2013 (push-pull parlor), 2884, 2844, 2839 (push-pull coaches), 2892 (push-pull bar coach), 2870, 2847, 2800 (push-pull coaches); engine 614 (ex-SP&S 858).

*AUTO-TRAIN, train 12 at Thomasville, GA Mar 21 (9½ hrs late): engines 4012, 4011, 4010; auto carriers 44, 50, 60, 62, 10, 37, 63, 21, 35; single-level carriers converted from baggage cars 192, 191, 193, 190, 195, 196, 194, steam generator 137, domes 512, 461, 702, 901, buffet 580, kitchen-dorms 599, 597, movie-buffet 596, dome night club 543, domes 902, 470, 462, sleepers 305, 205, 203, 604.

*EMPIRE BUILDER train 8 at Pasco, WA Apr 1: engines 541, 576; cars 1114, 2662 "Silver Prairie" (used as dorm), 5690, 4532, 9481, 9363 "Lake View", 8046, 9220, 2677 "Silver Basin."

*NATIONAL LIMITED train 30 at Kansas City Mar 15: cars 1198, 2621 "Pacific Northwest" (thru slpr), 2706 "Athens", 8302, 5423, 5441, 5417, DOT inspection car T-2. Train 31 at NYC Mar 24: engine 926 (repainted GG-1); cars 1182, 2621 "Pacific Northwest", 2234 "Tallahassee", 8060, 5410, 5426.

*Amtrak train 204 at NYC Mar 24: engine 952 (GE E-60); cars PRR 1640 (heavyweight coach), PC 1571, 5683, PC 1584, 6016, PC 1577, 6425, PC 1580.

*WATER LEVEL EXPRESS, train 73 at Syracuse Mar 7: engine 328 (E8); cars 6405, 3963, 6418, 6449. Train 74, same: engine 427 (E9); cars 6408, 6433, 3957, 6445.

*EMPIRE STATE EXPRESS, train 64 at Syracuse Mar 7: engines 425 (E9), 276 (E8A); cars 1049, 6409, 6416, 8332, 6406, 6442, 3957. Train 63, same: engines 442, 441 (E8A's); cars 1063, 6435, 6429, 8342, 6436, 6419.

*LAKE SHORE LIMITED, train 49 at Syracuse Mar 6: engines 590, 415 (E9A); cars 1530, 2021 "Silver Slumber", 2604 "Pacific Cape", 8336, 5684, 5653, 2816 "Potomac River", 5651, 3339.

HERE WE GO GATHERING NUTS IN MAY...Twentieth Century Railroad Club presents Rail-Fair '76: A Bicentennial Celebration of Railroading, Chicago May 14, 15, 16. Featuring Rock Around the Rock, a dance at LaSalle Street Station; Fifth Annual Chicago Railfan Luncheon with John Ingram, John Barriger, Rogers Whitaker, Anthony Haswell, Arthur Dubin; the Bicentennial Rocket, an all day excursion on the Rock Island. For complete details, send SASE to the Club at 10700 S. Seeley Ave., Chicago, IL 60643.

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TWO UNUSUAL US FUN-TRAINS--GLAMOROUS WEST Sept 16-Oct 3 and HISTORIC EAST--Oct 19-30--Yellowstone Park, Mount Rainier, Timberline Lodge, San Francisco, Hearst Castle and Los Angeles--Philadelphia, Washington, Richmond, Williamsburg, Atlanta and New Orleans. Very best AMTRAK and Southern trains. Write for complete details. Midwest Travel Service, 2936R Bella Vista, Midwest City OK 73110; 732-0566.

Want to know more about PC, LV, E-L, CNJ, RDG, Chessie, ConRail, pre-merger roads and all others in the Northeast? Then NORTHEAST RAILROADER (formerly PC RAILFAN) is just what you want. Every issue of NORTHEAST RAILROADER gives you "up to date" news on all railroads in the Northeast, plus a lot of pictures, maps, rosters, locomotive diagrams and more. Subscription rate is $13.50 for six issues. NORTHEAST RAILROADER, 133 Dulles Drive, Dumont, N.J. 07628.

WANTED: Back issues of the following magazines: RTN Vol. 1 issues 1-4, Vol. 2, issues 4,14, Vol. 3 issues 10,12, Vol. 4 issues 13-24. PACIFIC NEWS issues 1-33, 43. EVERYWHERE WEST issues 1-63, 70. CTC BOARD issues 1-72, 74-85, 88-89, 96-97, 100-101, 103-107, 114, 134. NARP NEWSLETTER Vols. 1-8 all issues, Vol. 9 issue 1. PTJ Vol. 1-2 all issues, Vol. 3 issues 1,4, Vol. 4 issues 1-3, Vol. 6 issue 3. SIGNALMANS JOURNAL Sept. 1974. J.A. Chambers, 20333 Roscoe Blvd, Canoga Park, CA 91306.

THREE NEW DUPLICATE SLIDE SETS from Northwest Rail Images: AMERICAN FREEDOM TRAIN LOCOMOTIVE 4449, 25 slides/$6.00; TRAINS OF NEWFOUNDLAND, 25 slides/$6.00; GEORGIA RAILROAD MIXED TRAINS, 20 slides/$4.75. Set price includes third class postage; add 20¢ per set for first class. Or send 30¢ for a sample slide and catalog listing 21 different sets, many featuring pre-Amtrak passenger trains. Northwest Rail Images, 4891 Donald Street, Eugene, OR 97405.

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AMTRAK P-30-CH UNITS 722, 723, 724

Has NRPC taken delivery of the last three P-30s? Location and assignments sought. Reply by postcard or letter - Postage will be reimbursed -
James Hal Selzer, Jr., P.O. Box 504, Slidell, Louisiana, 70459.

NEW ADVERTISING RATES for RAIL TRAVEL NEWS (for orders placed after April 30): Express Ads $1 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads (camera-ready copy) $25 per half-page (maximum size--4x5 ins.), $12.50 quarter page. Write: MESSAGE MEDIA - RTN, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.